

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 10, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Simas, Commissioners Bishop, Lampe, Larrivee, Tanaka, Zahn

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Jokinen

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Rebecca Rodni, Laurie Gromala, Chris Dreaney, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Simas who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Larrivee, who arrived at 6:40 p.m., and Commissioner Jokinen, who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald reminded the Commission about the October 17 Transportation Master Plan workshop. The meeting will run from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and members of other boards and commissions will be invited to attend.

Mr. McDonald reported that at the October 7 Council meeting the Downtown Transportation Plan was discussed. The scope of the Commission's work was highlighted along with a quick rundown of the mobility options and the recommendations for private vehicles, transit, pedestrians and bicycles. The Councilmembers had a lot of questions and there was a robust conversation with the staff.

Commissioner Bishop said he was glad to see Councilmember Wallace ask about the viability of the plan if I-405 is not improved.

Mr. McDonald said the Council directed staff to begin the work of drafting policy language and project descriptions for the Commission to review.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS,

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chair Simas said there have been questions raised about the role of the Commission relative to transportation issues both inside and outside the city. There is no argument that what happens on I-405 affects the city's transportation systems. The question raised by Councilmember Wallace about the viability of the city's transportation plans if I-405 is not improved could prove to be an opening of the door through which the Commission will be able to offer input on regional issues.

Mr. McDonald said he spoke with Modeling and Analysis Group Manager Judy Clark about what it would take to fully analyze the I-405 corridor master plan projects. She estimated it would take about a week of staff time. Mr. McDonald said they also talked about modeling the impact of the 124th Avenue NE interchange with SR-520, the southbound braids and the NE 6th Street crossing of I-405 and concluded that work could be done much more quickly given the geographic constraints of those projects.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the Bellevue Way southbound HOV lane is included in the base plan for 2030. The project is controversial for a number of reasons. It would be instructive to know what the impacts would be should the Council decide the project should go away. Mr. McDonald said he was certain that analysis has already been done in the context of the East Link project and promised to pull it up for the Commission to review.

Commissioner Bishop reported that earlier in the day he attended the West Lake Sammamish Parkway event celebrating the completion of Phase I.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and it carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Residential Parking Zone

Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services Project Manager Rebecca Rodni said her division in the Transportation Department was responsible for the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program. When a significant portion of CIP funding for projects was lost, along with one staff member, the group took a step back and looked at the essential services it provides. The program was revamped with a focus on what is most important to residents. The goals of the program

include creating a safer roadway environment for all users; enhancing neighborhood livability; and engaging the communities as active participants.

The program continues its focus on curbing excessive speeds. Up until five years ago the program actively installed speed humps throughout the city, but lately the top concerns voiced by residents have been regarding cut-through and school zone traffic. The program also addresses the issue of spillover parking and encourages walking and biking. There is some spillover in that non-resident vehicles involved in cutting through neighborhoods are often the ones that are speeding, and spillover parking is often the result of non-residential vehicles seeking a convenient place to park.

Ms. Rodni said active participation on the part of residents is key to the success of the program. She said a suite of communications tools is used to work with residents. The Traffic Action Plans are customized to location and concern and clearly show residents the associated data as well as staff recommendations. The program has harnessed the power of social media through the creation of the Streets Are For Everyone blog.

Cut-through traffic and spillover parking are addressed through education, encouragement and enforcement, modifying the streetscape, and parking restrictions.

Commissioner Larrivee said his sense was that many Bellevue residents remain unaware of the program and what it does. Ms. Rodni said there are a number of ways residents can contact the program, including by telephone and by filling out a "Request for Action" form online. A mobile app is set to go live and the anticipation is that it will generate a lot more contacts. The concerns voiced include cut-through and parking, but often they are issues that are forwarded on to the police department or the signals staff. Some 600 contacts are made annually by residents, 20 to 40 of which warrant a full traffic action plan. To date in 2013, 27 traffic action plans have been generated. The Eastgate annexation has triggered an increase in the number of contacts.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Zahn, Ms. Rodni agreed that the program could conduct additional outreach to let the public know about the tools that are available. The blog has been live for less than a year, and the traffic guidebook likewise has been around for less than a year. The guidebook is available online and in hard copy but it has not been widely marketed. She agreed with Commissioner Bishop that copies of the guidebook should be made available at the Crossroads mini City Hall. She said she would make sure each Commissioner received a hard copy as well.

Ms. Rodni said the guidebook outlines the city's 14 active residential parking zones. Originally there were 16 zones but zones 12 and 13 were disbanded for various reasons. The active zones are generally centered around large parking generators such as high schools and the downtown. In the zones, vehicles are restricted from parking during certain hours unless they have an active permit. Residents who live in the zone are provided the permits for free.

The program has been very successful at reducing spillover parking. The first zone was established in 1985 in Surrey Downs as a response to concerns by residents there about growth in the downtown. Since then guidelines have been established under which a zone is justified if several days per week 25 percent of the vehicles parked on the street belong to non-residents. Some zones have been expanded over time beyond their original boundaries.

Ms. Rodni allowed that the program has encountered challenges. Temporary spillover parking can result from the closure of park and ride lots, as well as from construction projects, particularly in the downtown. The St. Thomas Park and Ride lot closed in April and will remain closed for a year; the closure has resulted in the loss of 64 parking stalls. Very soon after the closure there was a sharp increase in the number of vehicles parked along 92nd Avenue NE. No residential parking zone restrictions have been imposed there yet, though safety issues have had to be addressed.

Commissioner Zahn commented that implementing a zone along 92nd Avenue NE to address the temporary spillover problem likely will only cause a similar problem somewhere else. She noted the city is doing all it can to promote transit and asked if thought has been given to where people are supposed to park their cars at origin points. Commissioner Larrivee weighed in by commenting that transit agencies have paid some attention to the issue, but largely it is a city problem. Commissioner Bishop said the response Seattle made to the issue in the Rainier Valley was to establish a residential parking zone around every light rail station, though they were later forced to take some of them out.

Ms. Rodni allowed that there are conflicting policies. On the one hand the city is encouraging people to get out of their cars and take transit, but on the other hand there are all manner of policies aimed at protecting neighborhoods, including from the impacts of spillover parking. In the case of parking along 92nd Avenue NE, staff was particularly wary of seeing the vehicles move into the Vuecrest neighborhood or along NE 10th Street. The upcoming five-year closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride lot presents an even bigger worry. The expectation is there will be spillover in Enatai and parking all along the line wherever there is a bus stop nearby. Proactive steps will need to be taken, and that could include imposing residential parking zones around every light rail station as they come online.

Commissioner Zahn argued that residential parking zones will only have the effect of pushing parked vehicles further out and into some other neighborhood. The best option would be to create places where cars can be parked legally and their drivers hop on transit. Ms. Rodni said the city is working closely with Sound Transit and King County Metro to come up with a plan for the South Bellevue Park and Ride closure and around stations. Nothing definite has been worked out to date, however.

Ms. Rodni informed the Commission that parking enforcement in the downtown is carried out every two hours by Diamond Parking. Outside of the downtown, however, the city has only

one parking enforcement officer, and while he does a great job he is very busy and simply cannot provide regular monitoring of all the parking zones; most enforcement activity is predicated on complaints. Weekend and evening enforcement is even more of a challenge because the parking enforcement officer is off duty during those times and monitoring must be done by patrol officers whose priorities are usually on other police matters.

Commissioner Larrivee suggested the city should develop a mean of tracking all complaint calls and using the data to focus enforcement activities.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tanaka, Ms. Rodni said parking violation tickets carry only a \$40 fine. The fine increases every two years in line with increases in the cost of living.

Ms. Rodni said establishing new residential parking zones takes a lot of staff resources. The need to create new zones around the transit stations will be addressed through the budget process as needed. Parking permits are issued by Service First to residents who come to City Hall, but the rest are currently issued by Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services. The stress on staff resources could be reduced by creating an online application process. That could possibly be done by tagging onto the MyBuildingPermit.com site. The program is allotted \$50,000 per two-year budget cycle.

Chair Simas questioned the traffic calming approach used on NE 5th Street between 120th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE. Ms. Rodni said the project came about through a fairly long public process involving the Wilburton neighborhood. The project represents an attempt at being proactive ahead of the NE 4th Street extension and the 120th Avenue NE project. The neighborhood was given a list of options, the most effective of which was a partial closure of the roadway. The neighborhood chose to retain access for themselves and voted in favor of the project as it is.

B. Transportation Development Code Update (BCC 14.60)

Development Review Manager Chris Dreaney reminded the Commission that a Transportation Development Code update was before the Commission in 2009. The Commission reviewed the proposal and offered comment. The issue was then subjected to legal and SEPA review and comments were sought from the public. The Commission conducted an official public hearing and voted a recommendation for approval. The update was then forwarded to the Council in late 2009 where some questions were raised regarding the transportation management plan segment. That issue was sent back to the Commission for additional review following which the Commission again voted to recommend approval. The update has not been back to the Council since then because of budget issues, the staff workload, and other Council priorities.

Ms. Dreaney said the Transportation Development Code provides the authority for the

development standards. The code dictates what developers must do in order to have their applications approved by the Transportation Department, while the development standards say exactly how those things are to be done. The Development Review group reviews the traffic impacts generated by any new development, as well as the related street frontage improvements and access. The Comprehensive Plan provides the overall guidance and the Transportation Development Code codifies the policy requirements and provides the authority for the design manual which contains the administrative standards for all capital and development projects.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Traffic Operations Division Assistant Director Laurie Gromala said discussions are under way internally relative to the fact that the Design Manual was established as a development standard but over the years has morphed into a design manual. The issue's that there are some CIP projects that follow different methods and processes. The hope is the design manual will be made into an instrument with a broader scope inclusive of all methods. New development or redevelopment on private sites has more leeway to fulfill the requirements of the design manual for eight-foot sidewalks, driveway sight distance requirements, and other specifics. CIP projects, on the other hand, often involve widening an existing street in front of other people's properties and it may not be possible to include an eight-foot sidewalk and adhere strictly to the required driveway sight distance requirements due to space limitations.

Ms. Dreaney said the code update will expand the definitions, remove some conflicts, and clarify the design requirements. The vast majority of the proposed changes involve little more than housekeeping, though some noteworthy revisions are included. The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan has policies that reference the pedestrian/bicycle plan and the update will specify that the plan has the authority to require certain elements. A new section will be added prohibiting multiple driveway access points when necessary for safety reasons. The update will also clarify that site loading needs must be accommodated on-site unless otherwise approved.

The definition of "development" at one point was greatly expanded, but upon further discussion and on the advice of the city attorney the decision has been made to match the current land use code definition of the term. A minor wording change is needed to better describe what is meant by the term "landing," which is the flattened portion of a driveway or private road which provides transition to the street.

Commissioner Zahn questioned the use of "cement concrete" and "asphalt" in the definition of "approach" given that there are other pavement types that could be used. Ms. Dreaney said she would look more closely at the wording and all instances where those pavement types are specifically mentioned in favor of some more appropriate descriptions.

Ms. Dreaney said there is no proposal to change anything in sections 14.60.070 and 14.60.080, both of which deal with the transportation management program that was the focus of

discussions in 2009. The most recent budget approval includes funding for staff monitoring of the current transportation management plan, and there was approval by the Council in September for a contract with King County to provide some support and monitoring of the transportation management plan requirements that apply to developers.

Section 14.60.170.A addresses street end designs and the proposed changes reflect the standards that work best for the Fire Department relative to turnaround facilities. Section 14.60.210.A provides the authority to require new development to analyze existing street light levels and make modifications as warranted in the street frontage.

Commissioner Bishop commented that the city's sight distance requirements are very practical and asked if any changes are proposed to them. He was informed by Ms. Dreaney that no changes are proposed for that section of the code.

Commissioner Lampe called attention to section 14.60.080.C.1.a and asked how the calculation is made. Ms. Dreaney said the certificate of occupancy for a new development establishes a baseline for SOV trips which must then be reduced by 35 percent over the next ten years. Monitoring and tracking is done by King County under a contract to mark progress toward the goal. She added that the transportation management program is separate from and in addition to the state Commute Trip Reduction Act which applies to businesses and buildings with 100 or more employees.

Ms. Dreaney invited the Commissioners to provide feedback on the code update directly to her. Ms. Gromala added that the goal is to have the Development Code update to Council for approval early in 2014.

C. Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. McDonald said over the course of the last ten years of working with the existing Comprehensive Plan, staff have recognized changing circumstances with respect to transportation, land use and environmental considerations, overarching regulations on the state and federal levels, changing demographics, and changing land use patterns. Policy revisions are needed to catch up with the changes that have been observed and to anticipate the changes that are coming.

Mr. McDonald said a lot of public outreach has been conducted to date, including the Bellevue's Best Ideas, an online approach to seeking input from the community in a number of topic areas, all of which are embedded in the Council's principles regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Mobility as a topic is intertwined at all levels in that it affects land use, public health, urban design and economic development. The Transit Master Plan is a major component that provides a basis for policies in the Comprehensive Plan. The Transit Master Plan has three components, a service element, a capital element and a policy element, the latter of which must be consistent with the policies related to transit in the Comprehensive Plan. The existing

Comprehensive Plan has some outdated language that needs to be revised.

Mr. McDonald said measuring mobility will be a key factor. The work done to date on the downtown plan has yielded quantitative metrics on motorized vehicle mobility. The data reveals how many vehicles there are, what the vehicle delay is at individual intersections, and what the aggregate vehicle delay is in the downtown. Far less is known in quantitative terms about pedestrians, bicycles and transit passengers, so a work plan has been initiated and a contract has been awarded to a consultant to focus on multimodal mobility policy options to address. The work will include looking at the best practices in use by other jurisdictions with urban centers and what is going on in the marketplace. The work will inform the crafting of policy language that provides direction for a work plan that would more fully and comprehensively look at a multimodal strategy for quantifying and implementing improvements for all modes of travel in the city.

Commissioner Bishop said the notion of bringing pedestrians, bicycles and transit into a level of service concept makes him nervous. Where similar steps have been taken things have tended to go in a direction of encouraging those modes of transportation and accepting higher levels of congestion for vehicles. He said he had no problem with encouraging more transit usage but did have a problem with ignoring the vehicles that carry the predominant share of people into and out of the city. Other communities have made that choice, but Bellevue should not.

Chair Simas observed that the focus has been turned to throughput of individuals, which is quantifiable. At the same time, the qualitative experience of individuals in vehicles is being somewhat ignored. On the other hand, the Bellevue and other cities have made that choice for a variety of reasons. The real question is how to maximize everything. The Transit Master Plan talks about transit being competitive with cars, a viewpoint that came directly from the City Council. Given the Council's direction to make mass transit a priority, the job of the Commission is to evaluate the priority without creating a detrimental effect on vehicular traffic. Where the two issues collide, however, mass transit must come out on top.

Commissioner Bishop said the Commission should be clear on the fact that with the incredibly aggressive mass transit assumptions built into the BKR model, it still comes out that only nine percent of the trips in the downtown are by transit, and only ten percent or so are walking or riding bicycles. That leaves the vast majority of those coming into and going out of the downtown with the car as their travel mode of choice. Every effort should be put into enhancing the other modes, particularly walking because of the greatly increased number of people living in the downtown.

Commissioner Tanaka questioned how much harder the Commission can squeeze for the benefit of cars. There is no room in the downtown to build more roads making the level of capacity a fixed commodity. The greater resource for capacity in terms of moving people through is going to be transit. The travel demand projections for the downtown cannot be

achieved through the use of single-occupant vehicles. He agreed that the Council has come down on the side of giving priority to transit.

Commissioner Larrivee said it was his understanding that the Commission has been tasked with revisiting the measurements used to determine the level of congestion and concurrency in the different modes. He said that approach is needed just to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the ground in preparation for calibrating the various modes.

Chair Simas said the charge from the City Council is to focus on moving people around the city as effectively as possible, with automobiles being only one method of achieving that goal.

Mr. McDonald explained that the Growth Management Act requires cities to adopt concurrency ordinances to make sure that land use and transportation are synched up. The Growth Management Act does not dictate a specific way of measuring concurrency or any specific level of service standard that has to be achieved. Bellevue has decided to adopt different level of service standards for different parts of the city and has chosen to measure the volume-to-capacity ratio of intersections at a two-hour evening peak period.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that originally the V/C ratios were measured against a one-hour evening peak period, but when the city began running up against the concurrency limits the measurement was changed to a two-hour period. That resulted in making sure the standards look better.

Mr. McDonald said there are three potential consequences of not meeting concurrency: denial of building permits, building bigger roads, and changing the concurrency standards. About ten years ago the City Council concluded that standards befitting an urban city should be adopted; that resulted in a standard of LOS E for the downtown, Factoria and the Bel-Red corridor. The recognition at the time was that those areas are more likely to see alternative modes of transportation to give people choices. In those areas of the city where there will not be as many transportation choices the level of service standards are different.

Commissioner Lampe voiced his overall satisfaction with the way the city has evolved its process and understanding of the issues facing the downtown. He said as a group the Commission has a pretty good understanding that traffic will continue to deteriorate. Transit will be a tremendous contributor down the road to addressing the issues.

Chair Simas said one of the steepest challenges that must be faced is the culture of cars that has been in place in the United States for the past century. As density increases the difficulty of getting around by car will become more pronounced, and as the availability of mass transit increases, people will be more willing to change their ways. In 20 years there will be fewer people owning cars, more people sharing cars and a variety of options that will ultimately reduce the number of cars on the roads.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that the issues of concurrency, level of service and how to measure it all has come up at every Commission meeting she has attended since being appointed. If in fact the Council has established the policy of looking at alternative forms of travel, the Commission should get on with focusing on systems that will provide effective competition with the car.

Commissioner Bishop said he has been in the transportation business for 40 years and during that entire time everyone has been saying transit will solve the problem and the automobile culture will change. An enormous amount of funding has been put into transit options but over the last 30 years the regional Puget Sound transit ridership as a percentage of the total daily trips has gone down from six percent to 3.6 percent. Across the nation and locally the car remains the people's top choice. The projected mass exodus of people to the central cities and the places where transit systems function best has not come to be.

Commissioner Larrivee commented that while that may be the case, the direction given the Commission from the Council is to focus on transit and mobility options other than the automobile. Commissioner Bishop said he questioned whether or not the Council actually has established policy direction to look away from cars.

Chair Simas said it was his belief that that is in fact the policy of the city. He said he would invite Mayor Lee as liaison between the Commission and the Council to attend an upcoming meeting and provide confirmation.

Commissioner Zahn pointed out that in the Bellevue's Best Ideas survey there were far more votes in favor of systems for pedestrians, bicyclists and bus riders than for cars. While not a scientific survey, it is still a point of data.

Mr. McDonald sought from the Commissioners input regarding the components of the Transportation Element to be used in drafting policy recommendations.

Chair Simas commented that there are a variety of studies currently under way in the city ranging from livability to the downtown transportation plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Trying to keep them all separate is impossible given the degree to which they are interrelated. Mr. McDonald agreed. He noted that the Parks and Community Services Board met on October 8 to discuss the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to their area of expertise. During their discussion they identified a mobility issue, namely that the linkages between park spaces are key to people actually being able to use the park spaces. For its part, the Commission has been talking about the quality of the pedestrian experience which at some level is a park issue. The interrelated nature of the issues is why the Comprehensive Plan needs to be reviewed for consistency.

Commissioner Bishop observed that when the Downtown Livability Initiative was first discussed by the Commission the question was asked as to whether or not there would be land

use changes resulting from the study that would impact the downtown transportation plan. The answer given was that the initiative would primarily focus on adjusting the amenity incentive system and land use on the eastern edge of downtown. However, as the process has moved along the focus appears to have morphed toward recommending changes in building form. Chair Simas said the study certainly could result in recommendations for land use changes, but that may not necessarily going to be the outcome. The work of the CAC will be forwarded to the Planning Commission which will ultimately make a recommendation to the Council. Some changes to building heights and the allowable floor/area ratio could be included in the recommendation, and those changes could ultimately affect traffic flow in the downtown, though the impact is likely to be less than significant. He added that in the end what will matter most will be the flow of people into and out of the downtown, not the mode of travel they choose to utilize.

Commissioner Zahn asked when the Commission can expect to see preliminary information from the consultant. Mr. McDonald said the staff and consultant team will be meeting for the first time in about a week. That meeting will define the expectations, roles and responsibilities as well as a timeline and deliverables. The contract compresses the work plan to a period of three or four months, so it should be possible to begin reporting the findings to the Commission toward the end of the year or early in 2014.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Simas reminded the Commissioners about the October 17 Transit Master Plan meeting.

Commissioner Larrivee said he would like to see time allotted at an upcoming meeting to discuss the idea of parking around transit lines in an attempt to get ahead of the game in identifying solutions that could be implemented before problems arise.

Commissioner Zahn asked if there could be some mapping done to visually give the Commission a better sense of the issues being worked on and the group doing the work.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bruce Nurse spoke representing Kemper Development Company, 575 Bellevue Square. He called attention to the first paragraph on page 7 of the September 12, 2013, minutes of the Transportation Commission and said the reference to Bellevue Square and Lincoln Square II expansions adding 10,000 parking stalls; he clarified that the projects will only add 4000 parking stalls.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 12, 2013

Commissioner Larrivee commented that the number of parking stalls mentioned in the minutes is in fact what was said at the meeting. He said the minutes are, accordingly, technically correct. He asked how the minutes could be corrected to reflect the correct number.

Commissioner Tanaka pointed out that until adopted the minutes are in draft form and can be changed. Chair Simas concurred and said it would be a good idea to correct the error.

A motion to approve the minutes, including a correction to indicate 4000 parking stalls in place of 10,000 parking stalls as noted, was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bishop and it carried without dissent; Commissioner Zahn abstained from voting.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commission the calendar and agenda of upcoming events. He said an environmental policy workshop has been tentatively slated for November 19. The Transportation Commission, Planning Commission and the Environmental Services Commission will be invited to attend.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date